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Sent: Thur 3/10/2016 2:16:18 PM
Subject: FW: News Clips (PFOA)

From: Rodriguez, Elias **On Behalf Of** Region2 PAD News
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2016 9:05 AM
To: R2 EPA Region 2 (EPA Staff) <R2_EPA_Region_2_EPA_Staff@epa.gov>
Subject: News Clips (PFOA)

Politico: Governor and his windbreaker yet to be seen in Hoosick Falls

By Scott Waldman

Mar. 9, 2016

ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo's windbreaker has yet to make an appearance in Hoosick Falls.

Cuomo's fashion choice for disasters and emergencies has become a familiar sight for many New Yorkers, whether he's standing on New York City streets flooded after Hurricane Sandy, trudging along a snow-crippled Buffalo highway or issuing statements in front of a burning transformer at the Indian Point nuclear facility. Typically, the speed of his response projects the image of a man in charge, quickly and calmly taking control of an emergency while all hell is breaking loose. It's reinforced by communications staff members who tweet photos of the governor hooking up a snow-bound car to a tow truck or poking his face in the cab of a big rig to check on the driver.

But Cuomo has yet to set foot in Hoosick Falls, where about 4,000 people can't drink their water because it contains a toxic chemical linked to cancer and other serious health problems. It's one of the most significant environmental crises during his tenure as governor, and the Cuomo administration has been criticized for its slow response — for the better part of a year, the state Department of Health didn't act on concerns raised by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

"He should have been there a month ago," said Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, a Republican who represents the area and who has been one of the governor's most vocal critics. "Leadership is showing up when people are scared to death with the water they've been drinking."

Virtually every time he spoke to reporters across the state in recent weeks, Cuomo was peppered with questions about the state's response in Hoosick Falls and why he has not yet visited the Rensselaer County village, where people are scared their tap water has poisoned

children for years.

Cuomo recently said that he was waiting to visit until a temporary filtration system was installed.

"We're within a couple of weeks when the filtration device is finally installed, and I want to get there in the next couple of weeks to see that," Cuomo told reporters two weeks ago. "Then, frankly, I'll start to relax."

The filtration system is now installed and the final testing is underway before residents are cleared to use the municipal water supply, though it's not certain when it will be ready. In the meantime, Cuomo has been barnstorming the state for weeks in an RV to tout his proposals to raise the minimum wage and mandate paid family leave.

A Cuomo spokesperson would say only that the governor will visit Hoosick Falls soon.

The toxic chemical PFOA was used in manufacturing at the Saint-Gobain plant at the center of town, located just above the town's water wells. The state has determined that Saint-Gobain as well as Honeywell, and possibly other companies that owned the facility previously, are responsible for the pollution.

Just weeks after PFOA contamination was found in wells in Bennington, Vermont, the state's governor, Peter Shumlin, traveled to the town to tour affected homes and businesses. On Tuesday, speaking to a gathering of concerned residents, he told them, "We're all in this together."

New York's health department failed to issue any serious warning for Hoosick Falls for more than a year. That changed a few months ago, after the federal Environmental Protection Agency told residents their water was too dangerous to consume. The state then joined in, warning residents against drinking their water.

Now the state response to Hoosick Falls will be "overaggressive," Cuomo has promised.

The state has since committed \$10 million to the installation of water treatment systems in private homes and to plan for a new water supply. Acting state Department of Environmental Conservation commissioner Basil Seggos and health commissioner Howard Zucker have both visited the village multiple times. Cuomo's most direct personal involvement came in late January, after weeks of mounting criticism, when he met in his office with school and village officials as well as Seggos, who later issued a Superfund designation for the site.

But the problem has yet to be fixed. There is not yet a tangible measure of success next to which Cuomo could be photographed. Volunteers, many of whom have day jobs, are still bringing water to people who cannot travel to the grocery store to pick up their daily allotment of five gallons of water per day.

In Hoosick Falls, 240 water treatment systems have been installed in private homes, but none actually work yet as they await more state testing. A temporary treatment system has been installed on the town water supply, but state officials have not yet announced when it will actually be effective. Meanwhile, it appears the pollution plume is far larger than initially thought and covers multiple areas.

Hoosick Falls also happens to be a ground zero of sorts for vocal political opponents of the governor. In addition to McLaughlin, the area also is represented by U.S. Rep. Chris Gibson, a Republican who is laying the groundwork to potentially challenge Cuomo in the 2018 gubernatorial election. It is also represented by Republican state Sen. Kathy Marchione, among the more conservative members of the Senate, although she has been more reserved in her criticism of Cuomo and the state's handling of the Hoosick Falls crisis.

"It couldn't get much worse for him politically," McLaughlin said.

Gibson has visited Hoosick Falls twice, and expects to be there in the next week. On Tuesday, he said he believes politics should not play any role in the response to the crisis. He cited his bipartisan work with Democratic U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer to include funding that could be used to help Hoosick Falls in the federal relief effort for Flint, Michigan, where tens of thousands of citizens have been exposed to lead pollution because of government malfeasance.

The Cuomo administration has ignored his calls to work together on securing Federal Emergency Management Agency funding for Hoosick Falls, Gibson said. He said Cuomo needs to be in Hoosick Falls to better understand the challenges still faced by people in the village, including those struggling to volunteer their time to deliver water.

"The governor is really the one that's not been involved," he said. "Now, he's certainly got a lot on his plate, 62 counties and nearly 20 million people, I understand that. [But] we're not nearly where we need to be yet in Hoosick Falls."

Photo: Cuomo helps a stranded motorist. (Office of the Governor of New York)

People of Hoosick Falls critical of Governor's response to water crisis

By Rachel Yonkunas

March 9, 2016, 10:19 pm

HOOSICK FALLS, NY (NEWS10) – It's been more than a year since the state was notified of the toxic chemical found in Hoosick Falls water supply and action plans are finally moving forward to fix the problem.

But critics are wondering why the response in New York has been so slow compared to what we're seeing in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Vermont governor Pete Shumlin visited North Bennington Tuesday, the town with the latest contamination of the chemical PFOA in its water. "The story broke in Vermont about 2-3 weeks ago, said Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin (R) Melrose. "That governor's been up there already. He didn't go up there for a photo op, he held a meeting and answered questions."

Governor Andrew Cuomo has sent resources like a mobile command center to Hoosick falls where people can come if they have questions about loans and mortgages. But the big question, will we see the governor himself reassuring the community? The governor's office tells News10 ABC he plans to do so soon.

Meanwhile, Hoosick Falls has become ground zero for PFOA contamination, prompting Vermont and now New Hampshire to test for the cancer causing chemical and now Congress is taking notice. "Now that the Senate is considering a bill that deals with Flint Michigan, we're looking to make sure that our equities and our concerns are addressed from New York," said Representative Chris Gibson (R) Kinderhook.

Wells have been tested in Hoosick Falls and nearby in Petersburg. Governor Cuomo also allocated superfund money to find a new water source for the village.

Valves mistakenly installed in Hoosick Falls

By WRGB Staff Wednesday, March 9th 2016

HOOSICK FALLS-- We're getting answers from the Department of Environmental Conservation about a group of valves that were not certified safe for drinking water and were mistakenly installed in the filtration systems connected to several private wells to filter out PFOA.

This is all part of an effort to filter out the dangerous chemical from the supply.

We asked if the DEC if it has notified all the homeowners whose water was affected by those valves and how many filters have been replaced.

In a statement, a DEC spokeswoman told us "upon becoming aware of the situation, we immediately began contacting affected homeowners to replace the valves in question. The bottled water advisory for drinking and cooking is still in effect so nothing changes while the valves are replaced. The state is now cataloging and distributing all component pieces of the carbon filtration systems to ensure the quality of all components of the systems. All sub-contractors are undergoing a robust retraining and certification program to ensure they know and follow the established protocols, and multiple sub-contractors that used these errant valves were terminated."

WAMC

DEC Addresses Hoosick Filtration Issue

By LUCAS WILLARD • 20 HOURS AGO

Credit Lucas Willard / WAMC

New York state officials say they're addressing a misstep in the installation of water filtration systems in the Town of Hoosick, where residents are grappling with contaminated drinking water. Meanwhile, work continues to restore clean water within the Village of Hoosick Falls.

The State Departments of Health and Environmental Conservation have been on the ground in

Hoosick and the Village of Hoosick Falls for weeks, since the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics site on McCaffrey Street was declared a state Superfund site in late January.

The village water system and a number of private wells have tested positive for PFOA, a chemical used as a component of PTFE, more commonly known as Teflon. The chemical has been linked to the McCaffrey Street plant, home to a number of tenants throughout the decades.

On Wednesday, mayor David Borge said the temporary filtration system installed on the village water system, paid for by Saint-Gobain, is flushing water lines and is ahead of schedule.

“Once all the outlying areas, if you will, of the village are completed – we hope that will happen within the next couple of days – then we will look to DOH to start the sampling process. That’s going to be a very complex and repetitive process with lots of samples being taken. And once we get the results of those samples, I’m very confident that DOH will be able to verify that the system is working and working effectively, and the water will be good to drink and good to cook.”

Until informed that it’s OK to flush their homes, village residents are still asked to drink and cook with bottled water.

On Friday, the DEC and DOH provided an update on the ongoing actions to address the contamination. Five of six zones within the village have been flushed.

Meanwhile, work continues to install filtration systems on private wells in the Town of Hoosick. At the end of last week, more than 190 systems were installed. As of Friday, 298 wells have been tested for PFOA. 49 have shown levels above the 100 ppt threshold. 123 tested did not show a presence of the chemical. That testing will continue and filtration systems are being made available for anyone with concerns.

But it appears the rollout of the filtration systems has hit a snag. DEC confirmed to WAMC Wednesday morning that a supplier incorrectly shipped a box of valves that are not to be used for drinking water to contractors on the ground.

In a statement, the agency said “Immediately upon discovery late last night, DEC began tracking down the incorrect valves so they can be replaced. DEC terminated the companies responsible for the error.”

DEC maintains that the filtration systems in question have not been used, as the state has not advised homeowners to use them.

The mishap has been criticized by local Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin. A Republican and frequent critic of the Cuomo administration, McLaughlin tweeted a photo Tuesday night of one of the incorrect valves that reads “It is illegal to use this product for Potable water services.”

Just informed of the valve issue, Hoosick supervisor Mark Surdam says he’s otherwise been pleased with the state’s operations in town.

“Very well organized, very well run. The couple of phone calls I’ve made over there, they’ve been very responsive. I think it’s a good operation.”

Meanwhile, environmental law firm Weitz & Luxenberg and consumer advocate Erin Brockovich

are expanding their investigation into PFOA contaminated water to Merrimack, New Hampshire. The team is also investigating the chemical that has been found in North Bennington, Vermont and Petersburg, New York.

The firm has filed a federal class-action lawsuit against the past and present tenants of the McCaffrey street facility including Saint-Gobain and Honeywell International.

On Tuesday, Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin visited those affected by the contamination linked to the former Chemfab facility in North Bennington.

Vt. governor visits North Bennington to discuss PFOA issue

By Lindsay Nielsen

March 8, 2016, 9:16 pm

NORTH BENNINGTON, Vt. (NEWS10) – The Vermont governor visited North Bennington on Tuesday to learn more about the PFOA contamination found in private wells.

PFOA was detected in several private wells in the village. The source is believed to be the old ChemFab plant.

The public water supply has not been affected.

Shumlin toured the ChemFab site during his visit as well as impacted homes and water distribution locations. He then attended a community meeting with affected residents where he made a lot of promises.

Shumlin told residents the state would provide a solution to the problem. But before that can happen, Shumlin said officials need to determine the scope of the problem.

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation said it has currently tested 135 private wells in a 1.5-mile radius of the ChemFab site. The state is waiting for the test results to come back.

So far, three private wells and two commercial wells have tested positive for varying levels of PFOA.

On Tuesday, the governor answered people's questions and most of them had to do with long-term solutions.

"We know that the hardship of living off of imported water cannot last any longer than it has to, and we agree with you," Shumlin said. "I just met with the Pembroke's down there. I said, 'Listen, it makes sense for us to as quickly as possible run the water supply, which is a really short distance to make sure that we have everyone in the radius on municipal water that's clean and drinkable.'"

The governor said if the state does hook up homes with private wells to the municipal water system, North Bennington will not have to pay for it. he said Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, which currently owns the old ChemFab plant, and all responsible parties would pay for it.

The main concern for those in North Bennington is how long they will have to drink bottled water before they get clean water again and what are the health effects.

News10 spoke with one person whose PFOA level at his well was sky-high, 20 times higher than Vermont's guidance level.

"After 94, 95 we started waking up with headaches, sore throats and the like. We couldn't work outside comfortably whenever they were exhausting," said Sandy Sumner.

Sandy Sumner said he wasn't surprised when the level of the hazardous chemical PFOA showed up in his private well in North Bennington at 422 PPT, which is well over Vermont's state guidance level of 20 PPT.

Sumner lives near the old ChemFab site, which is a manufacturing company that uses PFOA. Now Sumner fears the long-term and asked Governor Shumlin an important question Tuesday.

"We just want to know if Saint Gobain starts to push back how far is Vermont willing to go?" said Sumner.

"We're in this together. We wish we weren't. We're going to require the company to make us whole again", said Governor Shumlin.

Saint Gobain purchased the old Chemfab site in 2000 and shut it down two years later. Bottled water is being provided, but Shumlin said they must provide more in the future and any other parties responsible.

"This is an example of why voters are so angry right now. You've got the lobbyists for the chemical companies in Washington D.C. getting exactly what they want while citizens get poisoned by their actions," said Governor Shumlin.

Other questions were asked by those in North Bennington about health concerns.

"Vermont does have the lowest threshold for this particular chemical of the states around us and the federal government," said Shumlin.

The Vermont state health department deputy commissioner said they have not seen an increase in North Bennington of kidney cancer, which is one of the cancers linked to PFOA exposure.

DEC will continue testing private wells and take soil Samples and test the river near the Chemfab site.

A call line has been established for Vermont residents who are concerned about PFOA contamination. It will be available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Monday through Friday. The number is (802) 828-1038.

Money flowing to these businesses from Hoosick Falls water crisis

03/08/2016

Albany Business Review

Contaminated drinking water in eastern Rensselaer County, New York, has been an emotional and financial strain on the people who live and work there, but there's another, little-noted aspect to the health hazard.

The response from the state and local governments, and from private companies alleged to have caused the contamination, means money is flowing to a variety of businesses, including engineers, testing labs and water filter suppliers.

There are also attorneys and a public relations firm.

Yet to come: drillers, pipe and valve manufacturers, and others that would play a part in designing and building an alternative drinking water source being studied by the state.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has pledged \$10 million from the state Superfund to possibly replace the Hoosick Falls water supply and install 1,500 filters in homes that have private wells. The state, in turn, would seek reimbursement from the polluters.

The environmental problem has spread to the neighboring town of Petersburg, where similar contamination was found in the water supply. Taconic Plastics Inc. will install a carbon filtration system for the town.

Tops Friendly Markets just outside the village of Hoosick Falls - epicenter of the crisis - has sold about \$200,000 worth of bottled water since late November to Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics.

The French manufacturing giant, whose plant on McCaffrey Street was identified by the state as a potential source of the contamination, has been providing bottled water for free to residents and businesses because of elevated levels of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), a suspected human carcinogen, in the village's water supply.

Saint-Gobain also paid \$300,000 for a temporary filtration system that was recently installed at the village's treatment plant. Pipes are being systematically flushed before tap water is deemed safe to drink, a process that's expected to finish soon.

The filter was sold to the village by Calgon Carbon of Pittsburgh. The system was designed by engineering firm C.T. Male in Latham and installed by Jersen Construction of Waterford.

It's unclear whether C.T. Male or Jersen Construction will be involved in the design and installation of a permanent filter later this year expected to cost Saint-Gobain about \$2.5 million.

Officials at C.T. Male didn't return calls, and Jersen declined comment. In addition to C.T. Male, the village has been working with MRB Group, an engineering firm with offices in New York state.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation has been collecting water well samples from various locations in Hoosick Falls and sending them to four labs, including two that have offices in Albany: TestAmerica Laboratories and Adirondack Environmental Services.

The other labs are Phoenix Environmental in Manchester, Connecticut, and Maxxam in Ontario, Canada.

The state is also buying household carbon filters from Culligan in Troy, Aztech Technologies Inc. in Ballston Spa, Kissane Water Conditioning in Syracuse, and H2O Solutions in Telford, Pennsylvania.

With so much potential liability tied to the contamination, lawyers are naturally involved, too.

FitzGerald Morris Baker Firth in Glens Falls is advising village government.

High-powered plaintiff's attorney E. Stewart Jones in Troy represents people whose health or property values have been affected.

Another plaintiff's attorney, Chris Flint, has met with potential clients. His firm, Flint and Granich in Albany, hosted an informational session in Hoosick Falls last weekend that featured experts in environmental health and property valuation.

"If a lawsuit is necessary, we'll do it," Flint said.

A class-action civil lawsuit has already been filed by four village residents represented by Weitz and Luxenberg, a Manhattan firm that brought well-known environmental activist Erin Brockovich to town in early February.

Another firm playing a behind-the-scenes role is Behan Communications, a crisis communications and public affairs company in Glens Falls hired by the village to manage its response to the unfolding controversy.

"We have more than 25 years of national experience communicating with the public on issues pertaining to environmental and public health issues," said Joan Gerhardt, vice president at Behan. "Our work will continue as long as the village needs our assistance."

Vermont NPR

Bennington College Wins NSF Grant To Study PFOA

By HOWARD WEISS-TISMAN • 16 HOURS AGO

The North Bennington company Chemfab used PFOA to manufacture resistant fabric; the plant pictured here closed in 2002. The chemical PFOA has been detected in nearby wells, and now Bennington College plans to conduct research on the contamination.

Howard Weiss-Tisman / VPR

Bennington College has been awarded an \$89,810 National Science Foundation Rapid Response grant to offer a new course and conduct original research on PFOA contamination in Hoosick Falls, New York and North Bennington, Vermont.

The chemical PFOA has been detected in water near the college and the state is testing almost 150 wells to see how far the contamination spread.

David Bond is Associate Director of the Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) at Bennington College.

Bond says the college was planning to offer a class on the water situation in Hoosick Falls, which is just 10 miles from Bennington.

"Support from the NSF will allow Bennington College to do what it does best: engage the big problems of our present directly," Bond says. "We want to put students and faculty to work crafting new insights and new solutions in real-time."

Bond is joined on the grant by Chemistry Faculty Janet Foley and Geology Faculty Tim Schroeder.

Vermont NPR

Shumlin Promises Help As North Bennington Residents Face Health, Property Concerns

By TAYLOR DOBBS & YU SUN CHIN

MAR 8, 2016

Gov. Peter Shumlin told a group of North Bennington residents to call him personally if they ever feel the state isn't doing enough to help them deal with water contamination discovered last month.

Taylor Dobbs / VPR

Gov. Peter Shumlin and top state environmental and health officials visited North Bennington Tuesday to visit with residents and property owners affected by the discovery of a potentially dangerous chemical in private wells in the community.

Officials didn't have many new details to offer, but offered assurances to residents that the state government will do everything it can to help them.

"I am delighted to be here," Shumlin said at a standing-room-only meeting with residents. "Obviously I wish I wasn't, and I wish you weren't. And we're in this together."

After five wells tested positive for PFOA, the state tested more homes within a mile and a half of

a chemical plant that used PFOA before its closure in 2002. Officials are distributing bottled water and set up temporary water tanks in a church parking lot across the street from the chemical plant.

Alyssa Schuren, the commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, said the state took action as soon as the initial test results came back.

“Since that day, we have tested ... about 135 different private wells,” she said. “We haven’t stopped testing. We’ll be here today and tomorrow doing the last homes that we missed in the last week, but those test results will tell us a lot.”

Schuren said that when test results come back, likely sometime next week, officials will have a better sense of the scale of the problem and will be able to target their efforts.

One option for North Bennington residents with potentially contaminated water supplies is a pair of 400-gallon tanks in a parking lot across the street from the chemical plant suspected of causing the contamination. Under a protective cover, officials improvised pipe heating to prevent freezing around the spigots.

Credit Taylor Dobbs / VPR

Currently, officials are advising everyone within a mile and a half of the closed chemical plant to drink bottled water as a precaution, but it’s unknown how many private water supplies in the area are affected. Officials said that if the test results suggest there may be more contamination outside that radius, they will continue testing even further from the plant.

According to a fact sheet from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and Department of Health, PFOA exposure can lead to health effects “on the reproductive system, immune system, infant and child development, and possibly some cancers, specifically testicular, prostate, thyroid and kidney cancer.”

Tracy Dolan, deputy commissioner of the Vermont Department of Health, said the department’s review of available data showed no increased incidence of kidney cancer in the North Bennington area, but testicular cancer is too rare for the state to have enough data to determine any local variations.

Residents applauded Shumlin and thanked him and his administration for its transparent and fast response to the problem, and Shumlin assured them that he personally would make sure that the state will help.

“If ever, at any point, you feel like you’re not getting answers, like we’re being slow, like you don’t know what’s going on, call me personally because I want to hear about it,” Shumlin said.

Until test results reveal the extent of the contamination, though, there isn’t much the government can do besides provide information and keep sending clean water to residents. There are also plans to expand the municipal water supply, which tested negative for PFOA, to some homes with contaminated private wells.

North Bennington resident Sandy Sumner, who said his well tested positive for PFOA, voiced concerns about the value of his home at a meeting with state officials Tuesday.

Credit Taylor Dobbs / VPR

Still, many of the current fixes focus on the immediate health concerns and not the long-term implications of an unknown amount of groundwater contaminated with PFOA, which officials say has a half-life of about 90 years in water, sitting below the homes and businesses of North Bennington.

The lasting effects of the contamination had some residents asking about how the contamination might affect their property values.

Sandy Sumner, a 63-year-old Bennington resident, already knows his well is contaminated; it was part of the initial testing that first revealed the problem. He said he's not just worried about his health declining as a result of the PFOA contamination – he's worried his property value might go down too.

"Like most Americans, your house is your largest asset. And you expect to retire on that or at least help in your retirement," he said.

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